

It's all the rage...

A solo exhibition of work by Osman Khan

Between East and West seemingly lies... conflict or maybe more accurately the conflicted. The exhibition It's all the rage sits between reflection and action to address the concerns of newly emerging Muslim (and more specifically hyphenated Pakistani) identity and the political, cultural and aesthetic repercussions of this experience.

The title of the exhibition alludes to the overwrought and hostile sensationalism of the September 2012 Newsweek Muslim Rage cover story and rebrands its confrontational stance into the nuanced reality of the exhibition's double entendre pun; 200 plus years of colonialism, cold war manipulations, political double standards, IMF strong-arming, drone strikes, media misrepresentations on the one hand have led to systemic suspicion and anger at western interference, fermenting internalized desires for the Muslim world to enter the modern world in its own terms, it's our party and you are not invited! Internally the party is a rager! Mullahs and MCs, Islamist and secularist, police and polis, mosque and disco and everyone in-between all vie with blood or ballot, the right to define a people.

The Exhibition itself unfolds in multiple parts. Via truck, transport and installation, each in their own manner addressing the ambiguities of this condition, externalized conflict vs. internalized uncertainty, fabricated realities vs. constructed mythologies, East vs. West, Aesthetics with politics, all vying for a renegotiation of this fractured identity.

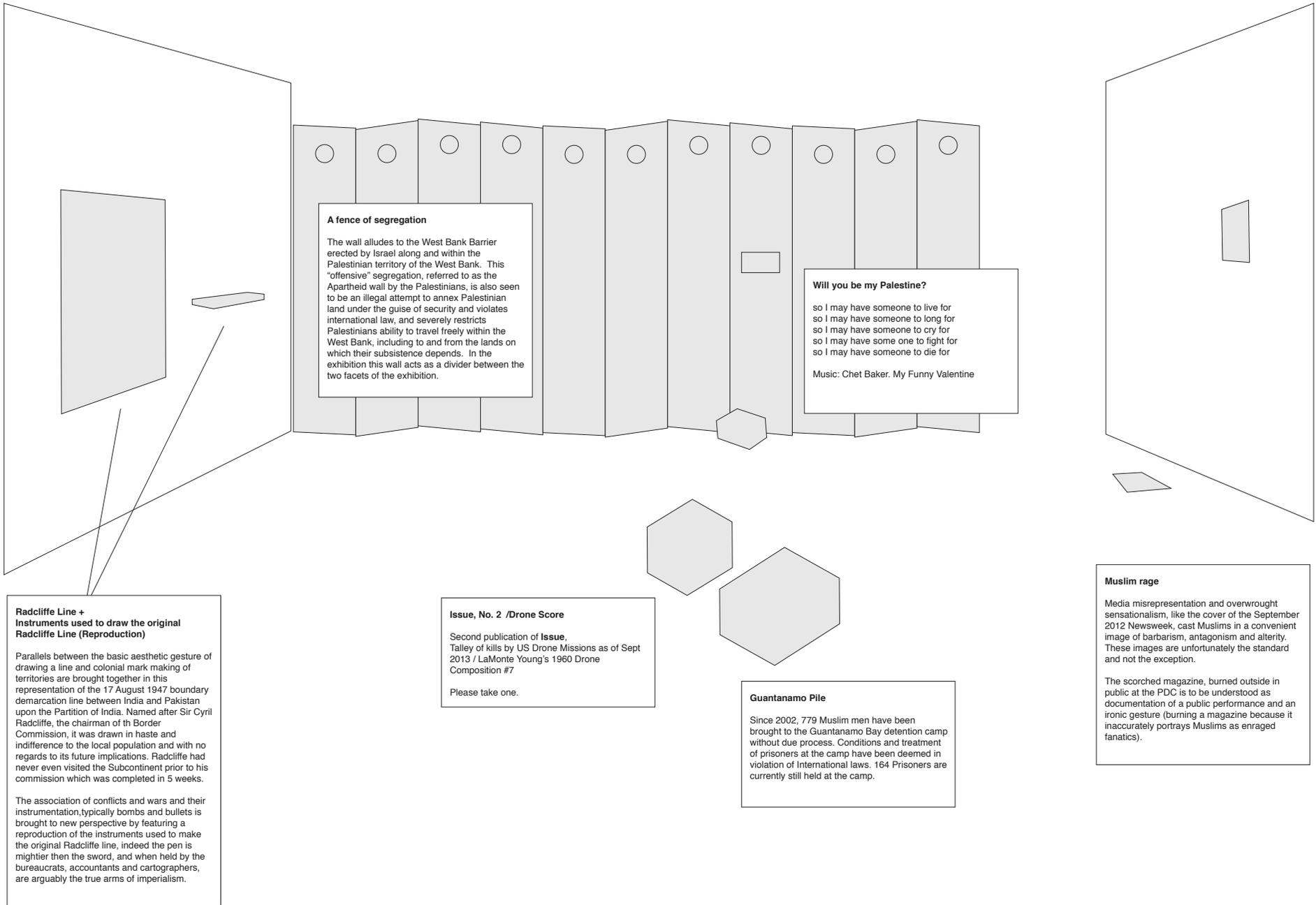
The exhibition was initiated with the purchase and conversion of a box truck that transfers the familiar iconography of one culture (the colorful and exquisite Pakistani Trucks painted with folk patterns and aspirational, historical, pop and mythical iconography) to another (the arguable blander American cousin, where graphical content usually is limited to corporate advertising).

The truck, driven by the artist transported the installation from Detroit to Los Angeles.

This aspect of the project proposes to address the lopsided expanse of globalization, where Western, in particular American cultural hegemony dominates the global landscape. With many post colonial nations still struggling to establish their own national identities (especially in the aftermaths of post colonial and post cold war conditions) and finding their cultural identity framed within the dominant western lens are often seen as exotic and in alterity. The modality of the project's gesture, the placing of unfamiliar iconography onto US trucks, asserts to introduce these images into the everyday, allowing them to become just another part of the saturated visual landscape as the truck crisscrosses the nation, and thus subversively insert aspects of this "other" into the American vernacular. As such the gesture also addresses ideas of cultural loss to minority immigrant communities (in this case Pakistani-American, whereas the decorated trucks, a ubiquitous site in Pakistan is lost to its migrated communities), who must negotiate what cultural heritages they need to preserve and what aspects they must let go within their new, albeit foreign, homeland.

Two subsequent and ongoing services are to be created, a truck decorating company offering similar conversions for client trucks (Indus Truck Décor Corporation), as well as the availability of the current truck to be rented for any transport need (Indus Truck Works Ltd.)

The installation at Another Year in LA, grounded in current Muslim and Pakistani identity politics vis-a-vis the world (and the artist), literally finds the spatial condition of the gallery divided into two: the aggrieved external and the ambiguous internal. The overarching stance of the works presented blurs aesthetic gestures within the contexts of current political repercussions. Where the benign gesture of drawn lines reverberate the traumas of colonial partitions. Where minimalist structures give way to political overlay. Where jokes and terror intermingle. Where want of polemics give way to hazy poetics. The works presented reflect on the afflictions, ambiguity and aspirations currently at play, embracing uncertainty and providing no resolution. It is the current condition. It's what is going on. It's all the rage...



A fence of segregation

The wall alludes to the West Bank Barrier erected by Israel along and within the Palestinian territory of the West Bank. This "offensive" segregation, referred to as the Apartheid wall by the Palestinians, is also seen to be an illegal attempt to annex Palestinian land under the guise of security and violates international law, and severely restricts Palestinians ability to travel freely within the West Bank, including to and from the lands on which their subsistence depends. In the exhibition this wall acts as a divider between the two facets of the exhibition.

Will you be my Palestine?

so I may have someone to live for
so I may have someone to long for
so I may have someone to cry for
so I may have some one to fight for
so I may have someone to die for

Music: Chet Baker. My Funny Valentine

Radcliffe Line + Instruments used to draw the original Radcliffe Line (Reproduction)

Parallels between the basic aesthetic gesture of drawing a line and colonial mark making of territories are brought together in this representation of the 17 August 1947 boundary demarcation line between India and Pakistan upon the Partition of India. Named after Sir Cyril Radcliffe, the chairman of the Border Commission, it was drawn in haste and indifference to the local population and with no regards to its future implications. Radcliffe had never even visited the Subcontinent prior to his commission which was completed in 5 weeks.

The association of conflicts and wars and their instrumentation, typically bombs and bullets is brought to new perspective by featuring a reproduction of the instruments used to make the original Radcliffe line, indeed the pen is mightier than the sword, and when held by the bureaucrats, accountants and cartographers, are arguably the true arms of imperialism.

Issue, No. 2 /Drone Score

Second publication of **Issue**,
Talley of kills by US Drone Missions as of Sept 2013 / LaMonte Young's 1960 Drone
Composition #7

Please take one.

Guantanamo Pile

Since 2002, 779 Muslim men have been brought to the Guantanamo Bay detention camp without due process. Conditions and treatment of prisoners at the camp have been deemed in violation of International laws. 164 Prisoners are currently still held at the camp.

Muslim rage

Media misrepresentation and overwrought sensationalism, like the cover of the September 2012 Newsweek, cast Muslims in a convenient image of barbarism, antagonism and alterity. These images are unfortunately the standard and not the exception.

The scorched magazine, burned outside in public at the PDC is to be understood as documentation of a public performance and an ironic gesture (burning a magazine because it inaccurately portrays Muslims as enraged fanatics).

Hallows of Saints & Sinners

The original blueprint of the house in Abbottabad, Pakistan that Osama bin Laden was found and killed (now razed) is paired with a photo of the mausoleum of Tipu Sultan. Immortalized as the Tiger of Mysore, Tipu Sultan was the first Indian king to be martyred defending his homeland against the British Colonial Empire, and is revered as a hero and a freedom fighter in India and Pakistan. Osama bin Laden had positioned himself as a defender of Muslims against injustices perpetuated on them by the West (particularly the United States).

In Between Heaven and Earth

Photographs of the heads and hoofs (still waiting to be processed) of Water Buffalo at a meat market in Lahore. The butchered animals, to use an Eisensteinian association points to the senseless sectarian slaughters, suicide bombings and endless wars that permeate Pakistani lives. On an odd note, the head and feet are typically the only recognizable remains of a suicide bomber.

It's all the rage

A resurrected Tiger of Mysore leads the charge of Kaiju Buraqs (mythic beasts that transported Mohammed to Heaven), the battle is for culture and identity. Western cultural hegemony is to be challenged, Muslim and Pakistani identity to be negotiated on our terms, heritages reclaimed and new hybrids created. Much of the imagery for the mural is derived from graphics found on trucks and buses in Pakistan.

Black Bag

References the 2013 Boston Bombing.

Zikr II

Alludes to the Islamic devotional act of remembering God through repetitive recitation. Here the illusion of the repeated tile equally references the history of Islamic architectural patterns and minimalism (Carl Andre).

Muslim Center

The black cube (with a nod to minimalism) references the Kaaba (the cube is built with the same proportions as the Kaaba), the literal center of the Islamic faith (all Muslims no matter where in the world face the Kaaba when they pray). The photo is of a Muslim community center in Detroit. Where then is the Muslim's center? The far away Arabia, mosque around the block?

Holy Drone! (excerpt from International Guerrillas, 1990), My Sweet and Tender Beast, Subtitled

Quranic drones kill the infidel, Orange is the new Brown, and Osama bin Laden and Mullah Omar play the dozens.

Of the Mount

From the mountainous caves where the first revelation of the Quran was delivered to Mohammed, to the current disputes over Kashmir, the mountain plays a significant role in Muslim and Pakistani mythology.

Tippoo's Tyger (Version)

Referencing the 18th century automaton created for Tipu Sultan that depicted a carved and painted wood tiger savaging a near life-size European man, the toy also contained a 18 note pipe organ. Here versioned into a sound system that serenades the exhibition with qawwalis, ghazals and other songs from Pakistan.

For whom mourn the passing of Monsters

Flight, of a bird or insect, is commonly equated with freedom. The allusion the video makes to the fly's inability to fly freely, subverts the equation evoking both sympathy and empathy. One feels for the fly that cannot get away -- stuck yet always hopeful of a forthcoming escape or freedom.